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ART. VIII. — *The Despatches of HERNANDO CORTÉS, the Conqueror of Mexico, addressed to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, written during the Conquest, and containing a Narrative of its Events.* Now first translated into English from the original Spanish, with an Introduction and Notes, by GEORGE FOLSOM, one of the Secretaries of the New York Historical Society, &c. &c. New York and London: Wiley and Putnam. 12mo. pp. 431. 1843.

THE constant succession of internal dissensions and military revolutions in those extensive regions of our continent, that formerly acknowledged allegiance to the king of Spain and the Indies, has almost extinguished the sympathetic feelings which, twenty years ago, led the people of the United States, with entire unanimity, to demand the admission of the Southern Republics of America into the great family of nations. But not to refer to occurrences in our immediate vicinity, that indicate political changes more portentous than any that have taken place since the first European colonization, we need scarcely remind our readers, all of whom are of course familiar with the unpretending narratives of Stephens, that though the philanthropist may have been disappointed in the anticipation, in which he had fondly indulged, of seeing well-regulated liberty established on the downfall of foreign despotism, other sources of interest, of a wholly different character, have recently been created in those countries, which were, before Humboldt's scientific travels, forbidden regions to all beyond the sphere of Spanish influence. Discoveries not of gold or silver mines, but of immense cities, once the habitations of man and the abodes of luxury and wealth, have been made, which have rendered the central regions of the American continent prolific fields for the researches of the historian and antiquary.

At such a moment, the inquiry naturally arises, to what people are we to attribute the monuments, that still exist in Guatemala and Yucatan, and which evince so much architectural skill that they may be compared with some of the best works of Greek and Roman art; while, in their colossal character and style of execution, they compete with the gigantic productions of Egypt. It is not surprising, when

we consider the ignorance and abject condition of the natives at the present time, after a vassalage of three centuries, that doubts should be entertained whether their ancestors were capable of accomplishing what the ruins of Palenque and Uxmal attest. But though we have no detailed accounts of the particular edifices, the ruins of which are now fully delineated by the pencil of Catherwood, the descriptions of the works of art that did exist in the sixteenth century, in the neighbouring regions, written by the very individuals who undoubtedly saw those palaces and temples in their days of splendor, will readily solve any problems as to the origin of the recently discovered structures in Yucatan. What the people of Tlascala and Temixtitlan could accomplish, their neighbours and contemporaries might assuredly effect ; and no one, we believe, who has studied the narratives of the conquest of Mexico, can have any difficulty in attributing, with Stephens, the erection of the monuments recently brought to notice to the same people who built the cities, of whose condition, in the sixteenth century, we possess from contemporary writers, including the great Captain himself, the most ample accounts.

But it is not as mere commentaries for the explanation of collateral matters, or as a guide to the antiquary in the investigation of works of art, that the annals of the conquest of New Spain are to be regarded. Whatever may be their value in these respects, whatever interest they may afford to the contemplative student, — these considerations sink into insignificance, when our attention is directed to the boldness of the undertaking of Cortés, the small number of the Spanish forces contrasted with the resources of the mighty empire against which they were arrayed, and the statesmanship not less than the military skill exhibited by the commander.

The work now before us, for the first English translation of which we are indebted to Mr. Folsom, a gentleman whose attention has been long directed to American history, and who, as a member of the New York Historical Society, and the editor of the last volume of its collections, has most effectually contributed to the present elevated standing of that useful association, contains all the despatches, that are now extant, of Hernando Cortés, the Conqueror of Mexico. They are addressed directly to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and present full details of all the occurrences,

through which, as Cortés at a subsequent period of his life had occasion to tell him, he had gained more provinces than he had inherited towns from his ancestors.

As the memoirs of a hero written by himself, the work before us possesses an interest of the same character with that of the *Anabasis* of Xenophon and the *Commentaries* of Cæsar ; and though the Spanish leader may not claim the high literary rank which the Greek and Roman generals have attained as classical historians, we are not to conclude that Cortés has any occasion, even as an author, to deprecate criticism. The despatches possess the attractions of romance with the certainty of truth. Compared with his great rival in the conquest of American kingdoms, Cortés enjoyed advantages of which Pizarro was wholly destitute ; and his origin, like that of the great hero of the nineteenth century, whom in many particulars he resembled, whilst it commanded for him the privilege of liberal instruction, was also such as required of him, if he aimed either at honors or wealth, to become the architect of his own fortunes.

In 1517, the first regular expedition that effected a landing on the Mexican coast was fitted out from Cuba. It was placed under the command of Cordova ; and, as Bernal Diaz, who also accompanied Grijalva and Cortés, was with Cordova, and has left an account of all these enterprises, we possess regular details of the earliest attempts at colonization on the Spanish main.

The reception which the first adventurers met with exhibited a power of resistance, on the part of the natives, far beyond what was afterwards shown against Cortés. On landing on the coast of Yucatan, Cordova was surprised to find numerous warriors, who carried, besides their bows and arrows, lances and shields ; and, though they were driven off by means of the musketry, the Spaniards met with a loss of fifteen men. At Potonchan, where they subsequently attempted to land, they were defeated, with the loss of fifty-seven men,—an event, however, which was in some degree explained by the fact, that the Indians were led by a Spaniard, who had been wrecked on the coast several years before, and had been made a cacique. It was in this voyage, that the Spaniards first saw those buildings of stone and lime, surrounded by fields of maize, which distinguished the habitations of the natives of the continent from those of

the dwellers on the islands, and indicated the different character of the population.

Grijalva followed in the track of Cordova, routed the Indians in a pitched battle at the place where the latter was defeated, pursued his way along the coast, and, after touching at Tabasco, Guaxaca, and St. Juan de Ullua, proceeded as far as the river Panuco, where Tampico is now situated. The Spaniards were astonished at the high cultivation of the fields, and the beauty of the Indian edifices, and they gave such accounts to their countrymen as were calculated to stimulate them to new adventures. The Spanish expeditions of those times resembled private adventures far more than public undertakings. Each captain found provisions and sailors for himself, while the arms and some trifling necessaries were furnished by the government. So far was a permanent colonization from being their first object, that the instructions, in general, were to obtain as much gold as could be had in the least possible time.

These two expeditions had been fitted out under Velasquez, the governor of Cuba. This officer proposed to appropriate to himself both the glory and the profit to be derived from the discoveries effected under his auspices, while he avoided undergoing any of the hardships or dangers to which a personal participation in the enterprises might have subjected him. Though delighted with the result of Grijalva's voyage, of which he took care to obtain every advantage by the accounts which he transmitted to Castile, and in particular to his patron, the Bishop of Burgos, he became jealous of his lieutenant, and resolved to employ, for the expedition that he was about to fit out, a new commander. By the influence of his secretary and another officer, who are supposed to have stipulated for some advantages to themselves, Hernando Cortés was selected.

Of the previous history of this celebrated personage, we shall give Mr. Folsom's account : —

“Cortés was born at Medellin, a small town in the southwest of Spain, in the year 1485, and was, consequently, at the time of his appointment, thirty-four years of age, nearly fifteen of which he had passed in the New World. According to Gomara, his parents were persons of respectable and even noble connexions in Old Spain, and were generally esteemed for their piety and virtue, although reduced in fortune. His father, whose

name was Martin Cortés de Monroy, had served when young in the wars of the peninsula, as lieutenant of a company of horse; and such was his standing at the time of his son's first success in Mexico, that his personal influence with the court was usefully employed in his behalf to counteract the malevolence of his enemies. Cortés, in his childhood, was of feeble health, and often seemed at the point of death. He early adopted, says Gomara, who was afterwards his chaplain, the glorious apostle of Jesus Christ, St. Peter, as his patron saint, whose annual festival he was always careful to observe. At fourteen years of age, he was sent by his parents to study at Salamanca, where he resided with Francisco Nuñez de Valera, who had married his father's sister. Here he commenced a regular course of academic education, it being the intention of his parents that he should not leave the university until prepared to graduate as bachelor of laws; as they designed him, says Gomara, on account of his talents and universal genius, for that rich and honorable profession. But Cortés was destined, in this instance, to disappoint their hopes. Weary of study, and imbibing a taste for more active pursuits, he returned to his father's house after an absence of two years, much to the grief of his friends. At that period, war was the most honorable pursuit in which a man could engage; and the adventurous life to which it led had peculiar charms for a youth of the bold and impetuous temper of young Cortés. The principal theatre of martial exploits in Europe at that time was Naples, where the great captain, Gonzalvo de Cordova, was conducting the Spanish arms; and Cortés only hesitated between joining his countrymen in that quarter, and embarking for the New World in the retinue of his kinsman, Nicholas de Ovando, who had been just appointed to succeed Columbus in the government of the Indies. He finally decided upon the latter; but, accidentally falling from a wall on which he stood, in the act of serenading or otherwise paying his *devoirs* to some fair one, he was laid up by the injury he received until after the departure of Ovando. He then turned his attention again to Italy; but, after wasting a year in fruitless endeavours to place himself in the road to military fame, he once more changed his determination, and resolved to embark for the New World.

“Receiving a small outfit from his parents, Cortés took passage at St. Lucar, in the year 1504, in a merchant ship bound to the island of St. Domingo, where he safely arrived, and was kindly received by his kinsman Ovando, the governor. After some service in the wars against the natives of the island, he finally settled in a new town, called Azua, being appointed public no-

tary, and receiving from the governor lands and Indians for his support. Here he continued to reside for five or six years, employing himself in the improvement of his plantation; but, when an expedition was fitted out for the conquest of the island of Cuba, in 1511, under Diego Velasquez, Cortés was induced to embark in it in the capacity of secretary to the king's treasurer, whose duty it was to keep an account of the fifths and other revenues of the crown. On the reduction of the island, which was effected with scarcely any opposition on the part of the natives, he settled at St. Jago de Baraçoá, the first town founded by the Spanish colonists in Cuba, where he again devoted himself to the cultivation of the soil, and had allotted to him the distribution of the Indians of a certain district among the colonists, in conjunction with Juan Juarez, a brother-in-law of the governor, Velasquez."

"When Don Diego Columbus, son of the Admiral, succeeded Ovando in the government of the Indies, in the year 1509, he was accompanied on his voyage to St. Domingo by his Vice-Queen, Doña Maria de Toledo, niece of the Duke of Alva, whom he had then recently married. They were attended by a retinue of hidalgos, with their families, including many young ladies of rank. Amongst these were the mother and three or four sisters of Juan Juarez, (already mentioned as associated with Cortés in the distribution of the Indians,) who came from Granada, in Old Spain. Diego Velasquez married one of these sisters, all of whom, after the conquest of Cuba, had removed to this island, of which he became the governor. Being remarkable for their beauty, these young Spanish ladies were much admired by their countrymen on the island; one of them, named Catalina, (or Catherine,) attracted the regard of Cortés, who finally married her; and, on account of the excellence of her character, he was accustomed to say, that he prized her as highly as if she had been the daughter of a duke.\* Prior to this marriage, a serious difficulty arose between Cortés and the governor. A number of the colonists had resolved to prefer some complaints against the latter to the viceroy, of which Cortés was chosen to be the bearer; and, when about embarking in a canoe for the island of St. Domingo, on this mission, he was seized and thrown into prison by the orders of the governor. He was, however, subsequently pardoned by Velasquez, who even stood god-father to his daughter after his marriage." — *Introd.* pp. 9–12.

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\* "Doña Catalina remained at St. Jago until after the Conquest, when she went to Mexico, and was received by Cortés with great distinction. She died at Mexico, two or three years after."

Velasquez soon became dissatisfied with his selection, though it had been sanctioned by a formal agreement before a notary, on the 23d of October, 1518, and a license had been obtained from the Royal Audience of Hispaniola, recognizing Cortés as the commander, and as jointly concerned with Velasquez in the outfit of the expedition. Cortés, however, being informed of the views of the governor, set sail from St. Jago de Cuba on the 18th of November, with three hundred Spaniards, in six vessels, and went to Trinidad, where he obtained another ship, and two hundred more men were enlisted. Thence he proceeded to the Havannah, where orders were received to arrest him ; but we learn from Bernal Diaz, that he had already gained such power over the minds of men, that Pedro Barba, the lieutenant of Velasquez at that place, wrote, in answer to the governor, that if he attempted to obey the order, he was sure the town would be sacked, and Cortés would carry off all the inhabitants. Cortés himself, as if ignorant of what had occurred, wrote a letter, the day before he set sail, to Velasquez, vowing eternal friendship. He took his final departure with his fleet from Cuba, on the 18th of February, 1519. And, that religious enthusiasm might not be wanting, as an auxiliary to that avarice which was the impelling motive with most of his followers to embark in the expedition, Cortés carried out with him a standard with the motto, "*Amici, Crucem sequamur, et in hoc signo vincemus.*"

The first land at which the expedition touched was the island of Cozumel, where the troops were mustered and were found to amount to five hundred and eight soldiers, and one hundred and nine mariners. There were thirteen musketeers, ten brass field-pieces, and thirty-two cross-bows. And this was the army that was to subdue a mighty empire !

The attention of the Spaniards, who at once commenced propagandism by destroying the idols, and erecting crosses and images of the Virgin Mary and of the saints, was attracted to the principal temple, which was built of stone, and contained a remarkable idol, so constructed that the priests entered it, and answered audibly the prayers and petitions addressed to it by the natives. But a more remarkable circumstance was the worship of a cross of stone, which the people adored as the god of rain, the origin of which cannot, it is said, be traced to the existence of Christianity among



them at any former period. The remains of this temple were still to be seen, at the time of Mr. Stephens's late visit to Yucatan.

From Cozumel, the expedition proceeded to the river Tabasco, where Grijalva had been kindly received. Cortés, however, being refused admission to the city, which was situated a short distance up the river, had here his first engagement with the natives. In spite of the terror which the strange noise of the ordnance occasioned, they fought with desperation ; but being pressed both on the side of the land and the water, they were driven out of the town. Cortés took up his quarters in the temple, " which afforded space enough to contain all the Spaniards, as it had a court and several large and elegant halls." After a further trial of Spanish prowess, the Indians, who began to regard their invaders as a superior race, begged for peace, and offered presents of gold wrought into various forms, resembling the human face, birds, and beasts. They also gave the invaders twenty female slaves, one of whom was Doña Marina, whom Father Clavigero calls the first Christian of the Mexican Empire. She was certainly the most celebrated woman in the story of the Conquest, and to her, scarcely less than to Cortés himself, is the success of the Spaniards attributed by the early annalists. She was a girl of great personal attractions and intelligence, the daughter of a cacique of Guasacualco, who had been sold into slavery. She retained a knowledge of her native tongue, which was that of Mexico, while she had acquired the Maya language, which was spoken at Tabasco. This latter was also known to Aguilar, a Spaniard, who was shipwrecked with the one to whom we have referred, as the leader of the Indians in the battle against Cordova ; and thus early were full means of communication with the inhabitants, in all the regions visited by Cortés, obtained.

The female slaves were all baptized before they were allotted to the several leaders ; and the same course was adopted, on like occasions, whenever similar presents were made by the Indian caciques, who often gave to the invaders their daughters and other dear relatives. Doña Marina, we are told, fell to the share of Puerto Carrero, but Cortés afterwards took her to himself, and had by her the son, who accompanied him to Algiers. She subsequently became the wife of a Spanish cavalier.

“ In the expedition to Higunas, (Honduras,) ” says Bernal Diaz, “ when Cortés passed through Guasacualco, he summoned all the neighbouring chiefs to meet him; amongst others came the mother and half-brother of this lady. She had told me before, that she was of that province, and in truth she much resembled her mother, who immediately recognized her. Both the old lady and her son were terrified, thinking that they were sent for to be put to death ; but Doña Marina dried their tears, saying that she forgave them; that, at the time they sent her from them, they were ignorant of what they did ; and that she thanked God who had taken her from the worship of idols to the true Church, and was happier in having a son by her lord and master Cortés, and in being married to a cavalier like her husband, than if she had been sovereign of all the provinces of New Spain.”

This statement does not seem to indicate, whatever may have been her other virtues, that very refined notions about chastity were entertained by the Mexican Saint. We ought not, however, to be severe in scrutinizing the actions of the Indian princess, who naturally looked to those by whom she was initiated in the Christian faith, for the rules of morality, by which to regulate her conduct ; especially, as we learn from the very clever work on “ *Life in Mexico*,” as it now is, that indulgence is still granted, even among the descendants of the conquerors, to females of the most exalted rank, whose womanly character is stained by the same transgressions, by which the Christian life of Doña Marina was unwittingly marked.

“ We went lately,” says Madame Calderon, “ to a breakfast, at which was a young and beautiful Countess, lately married, and of very low birth. She looked very splendid, with all the — diamonds, and a dress of rose-colored satin. After breakfast, we adjourned to another room, where I admired the beauty of a little child who was playing about on the floor ; when this lady said, ‘ Yes, she is very pretty — very like my little girl, who is just the same age.’ I was rather surprised, but concluded, she had been a widow, and made the inquiry of an old French lady, who was sitting near me. ‘ Oh no ! ’ said she, ‘ she was never married before ; she alludes to the children she had before the Count became acquainted with her ! ’ And yet, the Senora de —, the strictest woman in Mexico, was loading her with attention and caresses.”

Cortés proceeded from Tabasco by sea, along the coast,

to St. Juan de Ullua, and, while in that neighbourhood, and about to select the site for a settlement, he received a delegation from Cempoal, a city containing sixty thousand inhabitants. The lord of this place had heard of the victory at Tabasco, and he now sent to ask the invaders to visit him, and to solicit an alliance, such as would enable him to throw off the yoke of the Mexicans. This invitation, so much in accordance with his own views, was gladly accepted by Cortés, and the troops marched into the city; but not being without apprehensions of treachery, they proceeded through the streets in the order of battle. They beheld with astonishment the beauty and extent of the city, far surpassing all that they had before seen in the New World.

“In the market-place of Cempoal, stood an immense building of stone and lime, with loop-holes and towers, the walls whitened with plaster, that glittered like silver as the sun shone upon them. At first, the Spaniards imagined these walls to be composed of solid silver, but this error was soon corrected. Within this palace was a long suite of apartments, in which the Spaniards fixed their quarters, planting the cannon at the doors for security, and keeping themselves in readiness in case of treachery. Their fears fortunately proved groundless; the cacique directed a splendid supper to be prepared for them, and convenient bedding. The next morning, the cacique waited upon Cortés, and made him many rare and valuable presents; amongst these were cotton garments in the Egyptian fashion, with a knot on the shoulder, and jewels of gold valued at two thousand ducats. This visit was returned by Cortés, on the following day, in a becoming manner. In his conversation, the cacique complained loudly of the oppression and tyranny of Montezuma, the Mexican ruler, who had but lately usurped the government of Cempoal; he also professed his willingness to join an alliance against him. At the same time, he extolled the riches and magnificence of the city of Mexico, planted in the midst of a great lake, and the splendor of the court of Montezuma.” — p. 29.

The town of Vera Cruz, the first colony on the continent of North America, was first established about twelve miles from Cempoal, in the country of the Totonacs, a people who, like the Cempoallans, were anxious to throw off the Mexican yoke. Cortés took this occasion to dissolve all connexion with Velasquez, by resigning his command to the municipal authorities of Vera Cruz, whom, according to Go-

mará, he named himself, or who, as Bernal Diaz states, were elected in the manner customary in Spain. He was, at once, again invested with the authority of Captain-General and chief magistrate, though these arrangements were not made without difficulties being interposed by the partisans of Velasquez, who demanded that the expedition should return to Cuba.

While Cortés was engaged in laying out the new town, a deputation arrived from Montezuma, consisting of two of his nephews and a numerous retinue of nobles, bringing magnificent presents; and he determined to proceed at once to Mexico. Before setting out for the capital, he addressed to the Emperor, Charles the Fifth, his first despatch, of which no copy is extant; but from a reference to it in the second, we learn that it bore date on the 16th of July, 1519. Dr. Robertson tells us, in the preface to his "*History of America*," that having searched for it without success in Spain, it occurred to him that, as the Emperor was about setting out for Germany when the messengers from Cortés arrived in Europe, it might be in the imperial library at Vienna. Accordingly, through the British ambassador, he obtained an order that a copy should be sent to him. It was ascertained, however, that the document was not there; but an authentic copy of the letter of the magistrates of Vera Cruz, of which Bernal Diaz speaks, and which was transmitted to Charles the Fifth at the same time, was forwarded to Robertson, and is used in his history.

What is wanting in the direct narrative of Cortés is supplied by the contemporary authors, to whom we have already alluded. Gomara was the chaplain of the expedition, and seems to have been the authority on whom Robertson mainly relied. He is, also, very favorably noticed by Mr. Folsom, who mentions that there is an imperfect translation of his work, under the title of "*The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India*," &c. Bernal Diaz, who, though in a subordinate station, was an actor in the events which he narrates, wrote his work in 1572, in the city of Guatemala. He was, at the time, one of five survivors of the expedition, all of whom, after moralizing on the vanity of fame, he tells us, were "very old, and bowed down with infirmities, and very poor and with a heavy charge of sons to provide for, and of daughters to marry off, and grandchildren

to maintain, and little wherewith to do it withal." His object avowedly was to repair the injustice of other historians, all of whom, he remarks, say "Cortés discovered," "Cortés conquered," but make no mention of those through whom these results were effected. The book, though immethodical, is written with great apparent sincerity, and is replete with interest.

Cortés sent to the Emperor, with his first despatch, all the gold and other valuable commodities, which he had been enabled to collect, having induced the soldiers to relinquish their share for the purpose. The enumeration of the articles, most of which were presents from Montezuma, is even now astonishing from the variety, elegance, and richness of the workmanship ascribed to them. The existence of books, the characters of which resembled Egyptian hieroglyphics, of which characters specimens, in columns of porphyry and basalt, are still to be seen in the Mexican States, attracted the attention of the Spanish *savans*. Four Mexican nobles and two native women were also sent to Europe.

But though the messengers, accompanied by the father of Cortés, who seems to have been a man of sufficient consideration to afford efficient aid to his son, were favorably received by the Emperor, the affairs of America were not yet deemed of so much importance as to command the attention of a sovereign, who was engrossed by the more dazzling pursuits of European ambition, or to induce him personally to arbitrate between Velasquez and Cortés. In the absence of Charles, Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, the patron of Velasquez, and who for thirty years directed the affairs of Spanish America, was too powerful an enemy for Cortés to resist. It was not, indeed, till after the occurrence of the more brilliant events recorded in the two ensuing despatches that, by the influence of the Cardinal, afterwards Pope Adrian the Sixth, a reference was made to a special commission, composed of the grand Chancellor and other eminent persons, which resulted in a triumphant verdict in favor of Cortés.

"It was decided, that Velasquez had no other claim than for the money he had expended in the outfit of the expedition; but that by revoking the commission he had granted to Cortés, he had left him free to act as he should judge best for the royal service with the ships and men, which for the most part he had raised and equipped at his own expense and that of his friends.

This decision was fully approved by the Emperor, and communicated to Cortés in a royal despatch, which contained likewise information of his appointment as Governor and Captain-General of New Spain, and the most flattering encomiums on his conduct. Other despatches were sent at the same time to Diego Velasquez and Francisco de Garay, censuring their past proceedings, and commanding them to desist from any future interference with the affairs of New Spain. These despatches were all dated the 22d of October, 1522. A more signal triumph could not have been achieved, which, while it gave additional lustre to the victorious career of Cortés, carried dismay to the minds of his great opponents, Fonseca and Velasquez, both of whom died not long after, in comparative disgrace.”— pp. 34, 35.

The second despatch of Cortés is dated at Segura de la Frontera, on the 30th of October, 1520, and gives an account of his departure from Cempoal with fifteen horse and three hundred infantry, one hundred and fifty men and two horses being left at Vera Cruz. Cortés further says, that the whole province of Cempoal, with fifty thousand warriors and fifty towns and fortresses, was firm in its allegiance to his Majesty, the Cempoallans begging him to protect them against the mighty lord, who took their sons to be slain and offered as sacrifices to idols.

After describing how he had punished, as the necessity of the case and the service of his Majesty required, the delinquents who had been detected in the attempt to seize a brigantine, in order to send information to Velasquez that he had despatched a ship to the Emperor, Cortés gives, in a few words, an account of a measure which left to the Spaniards no alternative but to conquer or die.

“ Besides those who, from having been the servants and friends of Velasquez, wished to leave the country, there were others that entered into the same views, on beholding the great number and power of the people of the country, while the Spaniards were so few and inconsiderable. Believing, therefore, that if I left the ships there (at Vera Cruz) they would mutiny, and all be induced to depart, leaving me almost alone, and by this means the great service rendered to God and your Majesty be made of no avail ; I determined, under the pretext that the ships were not seaworthy, to cause them to be stranded on the coast ; thus taking away all hope of leaving the country, I pursued my route with greater feelings of security, having no fears that after our

backs were turned, the people I had left at Vera Cruz would desert me." — p. 41.

Cortés also shows how he contrived, at this time, to rid himself of the expedition under Francisco de Garay, the Governor of Jamaica, who had manifested some disposition to interfere with his exclusive colonization of the coast.

The Spaniards were well received in the several provinces and towns through which they passed, which were very populous and all subject to Montezuma, or, as the name is invariably written by Cortés, Muteczuma. At Yztecmasitán, according to the despatch, the residence of the cacique was surrounded by a larger fortress than was to be found in half of Spain, and which was well defended by walls, barbicans, and moats, while his dominions were covered with inhabitants for three or four leagues without interruption. In this place Cortés remained three days, in order to await the return of messengers, Cempoallans, whom he had sent to the Tlascalans, a people, who, though their country was on all sides surrounded by the Mexicans, had never been conquered by them.

On reaching the frontiers of Tlascala, whither he went before the return of his embassy, Cortés met with a wall which was six miles long, of dry stone, nine feet high and twenty feet thick, surmounted throughout its whole extent by a breastwork a foot and a half thick. Soon after entering this territory, which possessed a population of 500,000, and had, as we have said, always successfully resisted the great Mexican empire, Cortés was engaged in several conflicts, in one of which, he says, that he was opposed to 149,000 men, who in four hours were so signally defeated as no longer to be able to annoy the Spanish camp. In none of these engagements did the invaders lose a single man, though they destroyed numerous towns and many thousand houses, besides killing and making prisoners large numbers of the natives. On one occasion, Cortés attacked, with one hundred foot and his small body of cavalry, a place which contained, according to his statement, 20,000 houses. The subjection of the province was, of course, soon effected, and the Captain-general of the Tlascalans came to the conqueror, and solicited, in the name of the caciques, that the troops of the state might be admitted into the service of his Majesty. This was a most important alliance for Cortés, and was probably

essential to the success of his movement against Montezuma, in which expedition the Tlascalans accompanied him with all their forces, while they remained faithful to him on that reverse of fortune, which compelled him temporarily to abandon the city.

Of Tlascala a description is given in the *Despatches*, which, with the account of Mexico, will afford no bad means of judging of the existing civilization of the countries of New Spain, at the time of the Conquest.

“I remained,” says Cortés, “in my quarters and camp for six or seven days, as I dared not trust them; but when they invited me to visit a large city\* in which resided all the principal men of the province, who came to urge me to make them a visit, saying that I should be better received and more abundantly supplied with what was necessary there than in camp; and when they expressed their mortification that I should be so poorly lodged, considering me as a friend, and themselves as well as myself subjects of your Highness: in compliance with their request I went to the city, which was six leagues from my quarters and camp. This city is so extensive and so well worthy of admiration, that although I omit much that I could say of it, I feel assured that the little I shall say will be scarcely credited, since it is larger than Granada, and much stronger, and contains as many fine houses and a much larger population than that city did at the time of its capture; and it is much better supplied with the products of the earth, such as corn, and with fowls and game, fish from the rivers, various kinds of vegetables, and other excellent articles of food. There is in this city a market, in which every day thirty thousand people are engaged in buying and selling, beside many other merchants who are scattered about the city. The market contains a great variety of articles both of food and clothing, and all kinds of shoes for the feet; jewels of gold and silver, and precious stones, and ornaments of feathers, all as well arranged as they can possibly be found in any public squares or markets in the world. There is much earthenware of every style and a good quality, equal to the best of Spanish manufacture. Wood, coal, edible and medicinal plants, are sold in great quantities. There are houses where they wash and shave the head as barbers, and also for baths. Finally, there is found among them a well-regulated police; the people are rational and well disposed, and altogether greatly superior to the most civilized African nation. The country

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\* It still bears the name of Tlascala, though much decayed.



abounds in level and beautiful valleys, all tilled and sown, without any part lying unimproved. In its constitution of government that has existed until the present time, it resembles the states of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa ; since the supreme authority is not reposed in one person. There are many nobles, all of whom reside in the city ; the common people are laborers, and the vassals of the nobility, but each one possesses land of his own, some more than others. In war, all unite and have a voice in its management and direction. It may be supposed, that they have tribunals of justice for the punishment of the guilty ; since when one of the natives of the province stole some gold of a Spaniard, and I mentioned the circumstance to Magiscacin, the most powerful of the nobility, they made search for the thief, and traced him to a city in the neighbourhood called Churultecal (Cholula), from whence they brought him prisoner, and delivered him to me with the gold, saying that I must have him punished. I acknowledged in suitable terms the pains they had taken in the matter, but remarked to them, that since the prisoner was in their country, they should punish him according to their custom, and that I chose not to interfere with the punishment of their people while I remained among them. They thanked me, and taking the man, carried him to the great market, a town crier making public proclamation of his offence ; they then placed him at the base of a structure resembling a theatre, which stands in the midst of the market-place, while the crier went to the top of the building and with a loud voice again proclaimed his offence ; whereupon the people beat him with sticks until he was dead. We likewise saw many persons in prison, who were said to be confined for theft and other offences they had committed. There are in this province, according to a report made by my orders, five hundred thousand inhabitants, besides those in another small province adjacent to this, called Guazincango, who live in the same manner, not subject to any native sovereign, and are not less the vassals of your Highness than the people of Tascalteca (Tlascalala).—pp. 61–63.

In announcing the arrival of ambassadors from Mexico, and the discussions with them and the Tlascalans, who were mutually intent on each other's destruction, Cortés instructs us in his policy, and indicates his reliance for success not less on those dissensions than on the small military force, with which he had begun his conquests.

“I was not a little pleased,” says he, “on seeing their want of harmony, as it seemed favorable to my designs, and would enable me to bring them more easily into subjection, according

to the common saying *De Monte, &c.* I likewise applied to this case the authority of the Evangelist, who says, 'Every kingdom divided against itself shall be rendered desolate;' and I dissembled with both parties, expressed privately my acknowledgments to both for the advice they gave me, and giving each of them credit for more friendship towards me than I experienced from the other."—p. 64.

After a narrow escape at Cholula, from which the Spaniards were preserved by Doña Marina, who had learned from a native female the plan of the meditated attack, and which, as usual, Cortés contrived to turn to his own advantage, he entered the city of Temixtitlan (Mexico), as a guest. Montezuma, whose whole policy had been vacillating in the extreme, made every effort to divert the Spaniards from visiting the capital, and offered for that purpose magnificent presents, the natural effect of which, however, was only to render stronger the inducements for conquest.

The following is the writer's account of his entrance into Mexico, as well as of the reception given him by Montezuma, who seems thus early to have apprehended the fate of his empire, to which he attempted to reconcile himself by reference to a tradition, of which the conqueror, on his side, was nothing loth to take advantage.

"When we passed the bridge, the Señor Muteczuma came out to receive us, attended by about two hundred nobles, all barefooted and dressed in livery, or a peculiar garb of fine cotton, richer than is usually worn; they came in two processions in close proximity to the houses on each side of the street, which is very wide and beautiful, and so straight that you can see from one end of it to the other, although it is two thirds of a league in length, having on both sides large and elegant houses and temples. Muteczuma came through the centre of the street, attended by two lords, one upon his right, and the other upon his left hand, one of whom was the same nobleman who, as I have mentioned, came to meet me in a litter; and the other was the brother of Muteczuma, lord of the city of Iztapalapa, which I had left the same day; all three were dressed in the same manner, except that Muteczuma wore shoes, while the others were without them. He was supported on the arms of both, and as we approached, I alighted and advanced alone to salute him; but the two attendant lords stopped me to prevent my touching him, and they and he both performed the ceremony of kissing the ground; after which he directed his brother who accompa-

nied him to remain with me ; the latter accordingly took me by the arm, while Mutezuma, with his other attendant, walked a short distance in front of me, and after he had spoken to me, all the other nobles also came up to address me, and then went away in two processions with great regularity, one after the other, and in this manner returned to the city. At the time I advanced to speak to Mutezuma, I took off from myself a collar of pearls and glass diamonds, and put it around his neck. After having proceeded along the street, one of his servants came bringing two collars formed of shell fish, enclosed in a roll of cloth, which were made from the shells of colored prawns or periwinkles, held by them in high estimation ; and from each collar depended eight golden prawns, finished in a very perfect manner, about a foot and a half in length.\* When these were brought, Mutezuma turned towards me and put them round my neck ; he then returned along the street in the order already described, until he reached a very large and splendid palace, in which we were to be quartered, which had been fully prepared for our reception. He there took me by the hand and led me into a spacious saloon, in front of which was a court, through which we entered. Having caused me to sit down on a piece of rich carpeting, which he had ordered to be made for his own use, he told me to wait his return there, and then went away. After a short space of time, when my people were all bestowed in their quarters, he returned with many and various jewels of gold and silver, feather-work, and five or six thousand pieces of cotton cloth, very rich and of varied texture and finish. After having presented these to me, he sat down on another piece of carpet, they had placed for him near me, and being seated he discoursed as follows :—

“ ‘ It is now a long time since, by means of written records, we learned from our ancestors that neither myself nor any of those who inhabit this region were descended from its original inhabitants, but from strangers who emigrated hither from a very distant land ; and we have also learned that a prince, whose vassals they all were, conducted our people into these parts, and then returned to his native land. He afterwards came again to this country, after the lapse of much time, and found that his people had intermarried with the native inhabitants, by whom they had many children, and had built towns in which they resided ; and when he desired them to return with him, they were unwilling to go, nor were they disposed to acknowledge him as

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\* They are still called prawns (*camazones*), corresponding in some degree to strings of coral.

their sovereign ; so he departed from the country, and we have always heard that his descendants would come to conquer this land, and reduce us to subjection as his vassals ; and, according to the direction from which you say you have come, namely, the quarter where the sun rises, and from what you say of the great lord or king who sent you hither, we believe and are assured that he is our natural sovereign, especially as you say that it is a long time since you first had knowledge of us. Therefore be assured that we will obey you, and acknowledge you for our sovereign in place of the great lord whom you mention, and that there shall be no default or deception on our part. And you have the power in all this land, I mean wherever my power extends, to command what is your pleasure, and it shall be done in obedience thereto, and all that we have is at your disposal. And since you are in your own proper land and your own house, rest and refresh yourselves after the toils of your journey, and the conflicts in which you have been engaged, which have been brought upon you, as I well know, by all the people from Puntunchan to this place ; and I am aware that the Cempoallans and Tlascalans have told you much evil of me, but believe no more than you see with your own eyes, especially from those who are my enemies, some of whom were once my subjects, and having rebelled upon your arrival, make these statements to ingratiate themselves in your favor. These people, I know, have informed you that I possessed houses with walls of gold, and that my carpets and other things in common use were of the texture of gold ; and that I was a god, or made myself one, and many other such things. The houses you see are of stone and lime and earth.’ And then he opened his robes and showed his person to me, saying, ‘ You see that I am composed of flesh and bone like yourselves ; and that I am mortal, and palpable to the touch,’ at the same time pinching his arms and body with his hands ; ‘ see,’ he continued, ‘ how they have deceived you. It is true I have some things of gold, which my ancestors have left me ; all that I have is at your service whenever you wish it. I am now going to my other houses where I reside ; you will be here provided with every thing necessary for yourself and your people, and will suffer no embarrassment, as you are in your own house and country.’ I answered him in respect to all that he had said, expressing my acknowledgments, and adding whatever the occasion seemed to demand, especially endeavouring to confirm him in the belief that your Majesty was the sovereign they had looked for ; and after this he took his leave, and having gone, we were liberally supplied with fowls, bread, fruits, and other things required for the use of our quar-

ters. In this way, I was for six days amply provided with all that was necessary, and visited by many of the nobility." — pp. 85 – 89.

According to the accounts transmitted to us by the first writers on Mexico, the race that inhabited the country, at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, had come from the north of California, and had only resided in their new abodes about three centuries. The city of Temixtitlan was not founded till 1325, and was built originally very much like the Queen of the Adriatic, on small islands in the water ; and even the gardens, on which the first inhabitants relied for the products of the earth, were of artificial formation. In the course of time, Temixtitlan rendered tributary, or incorporated into its dominions, most of the neighbouring states, and extended its territory to both oceans. The kingly office had only existed since 1352, and Montezuma was the ninth sovereign in succession.

Of the magnitude of the Mexican empire, the accounts are not altogether consistent. De Solis assigns to it a territory reaching from Panama to California. Humboldt, after Clavigero, restricts its limits to the river Guasacualco on the east, and the port of Zacatula, on the Pacific ocean, on the west, which bounds did not include the whole of Anahuac. The population of the country is equally a matter of conjecture, — quite as much so as that of ancient Egypt. But though it was undoubtedly much greater than at the present day, we are not to believe the Spanish priests, who state that, from 1524 to 1540, six millions were baptized. As to the number of inhabitants in the city, the estimates vary from 60,000 to a million. " In the vale of Mexico," says Clavigero, " besides the three courts of Mexico, Acolhuacan, and Tlacopan, there were forty eminent cities and innumerable hamlets." " Fifty thousand vessels traversed the Mexican lakes." Of these lakes, it may be remarked, that the natural beauty, as well as the commercial facilities, have been in no small degree impaired since the time of Cortés, by the measures for preventing inundations, that were commenced even under the Indian emperors, of whose works there are still some remains.

From the description of the capital and court of Montezuma, we should be glad to give copious extracts, not only from their interesting character, but as fair specimens of

the translation ; but our limits make it necessary to omit many passages that we had marked for quotation.

“ This province is in the form of a circle, surrounded on all sides by lofty and rugged mountains ; its level surface comprises an area of about seventy leagues in circumference, including two lakes, that overspread nearly the whole valley, being navigated by boats more than fifty leagues round. One of these lakes contains fresh, and the other, which is the larger of the two, salt water. On one side of the lakes, in the middle of the valley, a range of highlands divides them from one another, with the exception of a narrow strait which lies between the highlands and the lofty sierras. This strait is a bow-shot wide, and connects the two lakes ; and by this means a trade is carried on between the cities and other settlements on the lakes, in canoes, without the necessity of travelling by land.

“ This great city of Temixtitan [Mexico] is situated in this salt lake ; and, from the main land to the denser parts of it, by whichever route one chooses to enter, the distance is two leagues. There are four avenues or entrances to the city, all of which are formed by artificial causeways, two spears' length in width. The city is as large as Seville or Cordova ; its streets, (I speak of the principal ones,) are very wide and straight ; some of these, and all the inferior ones, are half land and half water, and are navigated by canoes. All the streets, at intervals, have openings, through which the water flows, crossing from one street to another ; and, at these openings, some of which are very wide, there are also very wide bridges, composed of large pieces of timber, of great strength, and well put together ; on many of these bridges, ten horses can go abreast.

“ This city has many public squares, in which are situated the markets, and other places for buying and selling. There is one square twice as large as that of the city of Salamanca, surrounded by porticoes, where are daily assembled more than sixty thousand souls, engaged in buying and selling ; and where are found all kinds of merchandise that the world affords, embracing the necessities of life — as, for instance, articles of food, as well as jewels of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, tin, precious stones, bones, shells, snails, and feathers. There are also exposed for sale wrought and unwrought stone ; bricks, burnt and unburnt ; timber, hewn and unhewn, of different sorts. There is a street for game, where every variety of birds found in the country are sold.” — “ Painters' colors, as numerous as can be found in Spain, and as fine shades ; deerskins, dressed and undressed, dyed different colors ; earthenware, of a large

size and excellent quality ; large and small jars, jugs, pots, bricks, and an endless variety of vessels, all made of fine clay, and all or most of them glazed and painted ; maize, or Indian corn, in the grain and in the form of bread — preferred in the grain, for its flavor, to that of the other islands and terra firma ; patés of birds and fish ; great quantities of fish, fresh, salt, cooked, and uncooked ; the eggs of hens, geese, and of all the other birds I have mentioned, in great abundance, and cakes made of eggs ; finally, every thing that can be found throughout the whole country is sold in the markets, comprising articles so numerous that, to avoid prolixity, and because their names are not retained in my memory, or are unknown to me, I shall not attempt to enumerate them. Every kind of merchandise is sold in a particular street or quarter assigned to it exclusively, and thus the best order is preserved. They sell every thing by number or measure ; at least, so far, we have not observed them to sell any thing by weight. There is a building in the great square that is used as an audience-house, where ten or twelve persons, who are magistrates, sit and decide all controversies that arise in the market, and order delinquents to be punished. In the same square, there are other persons, who go constantly about among the people, observing what is sold, and the measures used in selling ; and they have been seen to break measures that were not true.

“ This great city contains a large number of temples,\* or houses for their idols, very handsome edifices, which are situated in the different districts and the suburbs ; in the principal ones, religious persons of each particular sect are constantly residing, for whose use, beside the houses containing the idols, there are other convenient habitations.” — “ Among these temples, there is one which far surpasses all the rest, whose grandeur of architectural details no human tongue is able to describe ; for, within its precincts, surrounded by a lofty wall, there is room enough for a town of five hundred families. Around the interior of this enclosure, there are handsome edifices, containing large halls and corridors, in which the religious persons attached to the temple reside. There are full forty towers, which are lofty and well built, the largest of which has fifty steps leading to its main body, and is higher than the tower of the principal church at Seville. The stone and wood of which they are constructed are so well wrought in every part, that nothing could be better done ; for the interior of the chapels containing the idols consists of curious imagery, wrought in stone, with plaster ceilings,

\* “ The original has the word *mezquitas*, mosques ; but, as that term is applied, in English, exclusively to Mahometan places of worship, one of more general application is used in the translation.”

and wood-work carved in relief, and painted with figures of monsters and other objects. All these towers are the burial-places of the nobles, and every chapel in them is dedicated to a particular idol, to which they pay their devotions.

“There are three halls in this grand temple, which contain the principal idols; these are of wonderful extent and height, and admirable workmanship, adorned with figures sculptured in stone and wood; leading from the halls are chapels with very small doors, to which the light is not admitted, nor are any persons except the priests, and not all of them. In these chapels are the images or idols, although, as I have before said, many of them are also found on the outside; the principal ones, in which the people have greatest faith and confidence, I precipitated from their pedestals, and cast them down the steps of the temple, purifying the chapels in which they had stood, as they were all polluted with human blood, shed in the sacrifices. In the place of these I put images of our Lady and the Saints, which excited not a little feeling in Mutezuma and the inhabitants, who at first remonstrated.

“In regard to the domestic appointments of Mutezuma, and the wonderful grandeur and state that he maintains, there is so much to be told, that I assure your Highness, I know not where to begin my relation, so as to be able to finish any part of it. For, as I have already stated, what can be more wonderful, than that a barbarous monarch, as he is, should have every object found in his dominions imitated in gold, silver, precious stones, and feathers; the gold and silver being wrought so naturally as not to be surpassed by any smith in the world; the stone-work executed with such perfection that it is difficult to conceive what instruments could have been used; and the feather-work superior to the finest productions in wax or embroidery.

“There are fortified places in all the provinces, garrisoned with his own men, where are also stationed his governors and collectors of the rents and tribute rendered him by every province; and an account is kept of what each is obliged to pay, as they have characters and figures made on paper that are used for this purpose. Each province renders a tribute of its own peculiar productions, so that the sovereign receives a great variety of articles from different quarters. No prince was ever more feared by his subjects, both in his presence and absence. He possessed, out of the city as well as within, numerous villas, each of which had its peculiar sources of amusement, and all were constructed in the best possible manner for the use of a great prince and lord. Within the city, his palaces were so wonderful that it is hardly possible to describe their beauty and



extent; I can only say, that in Spain there is nothing equal to them.

“There was one palace, somewhat inferior to the rest, attached to which was a beautiful garden, with balconies extending over it, supported by marble columns, and having a floor formed of jasper, elegantly inlaid. There were apartments in this palace sufficient to lodge two princes of the highest rank with their retinues. There were likewise belonging to it ten pools of water, in which were kept the different species of water-birds found in this country, of which there is a great variety, all of which are domesticated; for the sea-birds, there were pools of salt water, and, for the river-birds, of fresh water. The water is let off at certain times to keep it pure, and is replenished by means of pipes. Each species of bird is supplied with the food natural to it, which it feeds upon when wild. Thus, fish is given to birds that usually eat it; worms, maize, and the finer seeds, to such as prefer them. And I assure your Highness, that to the birds accustomed to eat fish there is given the enormous quantity of ten arrobas every day, taken in the salt lake. The emperor has three hundred men, whose sole employment is to take care of these birds; and there are others, whose only business is to attend to the birds that are in bad health.”—pp. 111–122.

There were regular couriers established, at stated distances, on the principal routes, so that intelligence could be carried from one to another with great rapidity throughout the empire. The communications were made by painting the objects to be described on cloths of cotton. It was in this manner, that Montezuma was apprized of the arrival of Cortés, and of his victory at Tabasco.

The abilities of the Conqueror cannot be appreciated without a reference to the difficulties, in which he was involved by the continued hostility of Velasquez. In his wars with the natives, he enjoyed the superiority which European weapons afforded, and, while the Indians were unacquainted with gunpowder, they not unreasonably ascribed supernatural powers to those who could create, as it seemed, the thunder and lightning of heaven. But when, far in the interior of a foreign land, his handful of men were surrounded in a walled town by hundreds of thousands, whose first feelings of reverence and awe had been converted into implacable hatred, and whom daily intercourse and the means of observing the practice of all the European vices

had taught that their invaders were mortal, he received intelligence of the arrival of a body of his countrymen, double the number of his own forces, and commanded by a rival, who enjoyed those advantages which the sanction of a regular authority confers, and which Cortés could with difficulty claim ; when we learn that, from such embarrassments, he found means not only to extricate himself, but to turn the occurrence to his own advantage, and render it the source and foundation of new successes, we cannot fail to recognize in him an indomitable energy of character, and those resources adequate to every emergency, which are only to be found in men of the highest order of genius.

Though Narvaez was invested with the authority of Governor, derived from the same power that had given the original commission to Cortés, the latter determined at once to treat his rival as a usurper. With as large a force as he could collect, but which, after leaving five hundred men in garrison in Mexico, only amounted to seventy followers, or, including those added at Cholula, to two hundred and fifty, he proceeded to meet Narvaez at Cempoal. What occurred after his arrival in the neighbourhood of that city, is best told in the language of the Despatch.

“ I gave orders to Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguazil mayor, to arrest the said Narvaez, and those persons who styled themselves *alcaldes* and *regidores* ; and for this purpose I placed eighty men under his command to proceed with him to make the arrest ; — taking myself one hundred and seventy others, (the whole number being two hundred and fifty,) without artillery or horse, but on foot, I followed the alguazil mayor to support him, in case the said Narvaez and the rest should choose to resist the execution of his process.

“ On the same day that the alguazil mayor and myself arrived with our party near the city of Cempoal, where Narvaez had quartered his army, he received information of our approach, and sallied out with eighty horse and five hundred foot, leaving the rest of his force within their quarters in the great temple of the city, which was strongly fortified. Having marched out within a league of the place where we were, and not finding us, he concluded that the Indians who had given the alarm had deceived him, and returned to the city, taking the precaution to have his whole force in readiness, and posting two men about a league from the city to give notice of our approach. As I was desirous of avoiding as much as possible all offensive appearances, it

seemed to me that it would be best to go by night, without being discovered, if practicable, directly to the quarters of Narvaez, (with the situation of which we were all well acquainted,) and seize him at once; for I thought that as soon as he was taken prisoner, there would be no further trouble.

“On Easter day, a little after midnight, I marched for the quarters of Narvaez, and before I met with the men he had posted outside of the city, the scouts I had sent forward took one of them prisoner, but the other made his escape; from the former I received information of the state of things in the city. I then hastened as much as possible, to prevent the one who had escaped from arriving before me, and giving notice of my approach; but notwithstanding my exertions, he was half an hour in advance of me. When I reached the city, Narvaez had all his men in full armor, and the horses caparisoned, in complete readiness, and two hundred men guarded every square. We moved so silently that when we were at last discovered, and the alarm was given, I had entered the square in which were the quarters occupied by the whole army, and had taken possession of three or four towers, besides the other strong buildings that stood in the same square. In one of these towers, where Narvaez was quartered, the staircase was defended by nineteen matchlocks; but we mounted it with such rapidity that they had not time to put fire to more than one of the pieces, which, it pleased God, did not go off, nor occasion any injury. So our men ascended the tower until they reached the apartment of Narvaez, where he and about fifty of his men fought with the alguazil mayor and the rest that had gone up, and although the latter called upon them many times to surrender to your Highness, they refused until the building was set on fire, when they at last gave in.

“While the alguazil mayor was employed in taking Narvaez, I, with the rest of our force, who came to their assistance, guarded the ascent of the tower, and caused the artillery to be seized and used for our defence. Thus, without the loss of more than two men, who were killed by the discharge of a gun, all those that we wished to arrest were taken, and the rest deprived of their arms, promising obedience to your Majesty’s officers of justice.” — pp. 141, 142.

While these events were occurring at Cempoal, the Mexicans were not idle; but having confined the Spanish garrison to their quarters, they collected their forces with a view to the entire expulsion of the invaders. Though Cortés came back to the city with a greatly increased army, recruited from the followers of Narvaez, he was immediately attacked on entering the fortress, and was soon compelled,

after repeated conflicts, during one of which Montezuma, still a prisoner in the hands of Cortés, was killed by his own people, to abandon it, and retreat to the province of Tlascalala. Indeed, so determined were the Mexicans to expel the Spanish troops, that they made a deliberate calculation that they could afford to sacrifice twenty-five thousand natives to effect the destruction of one Spaniard. Nor was there only the ordinary desire to recover their liberty, that impelled them to this course. They were immediately stimulated to revenge, says Bernal Diaz, by the acts of Alvarado, who commanded in the absence of Cortés, and who fell upon the Mexicans, while they were holding a feast in honor of their gods, for which he had given consent.

Such were the disasters attendant on the precipitate retreat of Cortés, in which he lost during one night one hundred and fifty Spaniards and two thousand of his Indian auxiliaries, not to speak of forty-five horses, which, like elephants in the wars of antiquity, were then much more prized than any number of natives, that the anniversary of his departure has ever since been distinguished as the *noche triste* in the Spanish-Mexican calendar. And had not the Tlascalans, who, at that time, could hardly have been ignorant of the ultimate designs of the Spaniards, preferred the destruction of Mexico to their own independence, the fate of Cortés, in spite of all his former brilliant successes, would have been sealed. As it was, however, he was most kindly received on reaching the limits of their state, “and assured, that he might rely on their proving sure and fast friends to him, until death.” Cortés availed himself of the hospitality of his generous allies, till his forces were sufficiently recruited to go in search of new victories ; and this letter, after recounting several successes, and the subjugation of new provinces, concludes with an account of the preparations that he was making to obtain the command of the lakes, and to regain possession of Mexico.

The third Despatch, which is dated at the city of Cuyoacan, where the Spaniards established themselves during the rebuilding of the capital, commences with a narrative of the events which preceded the fall of Mexico. The termination of the war was effected only by the entire destruction of the most splendid city of the New World. The forces engaged in this affair were reviewed in the city of Tlascalala, on

the second day after Christmas, 1520, and found to consist of forty horse and five hundred foot. We shall give the speech of Cortés to his troops on this occasion, which is remarkable for the effrontery with which he asserts the justice of his cause, and for the apparent sincerity with which he brands, as rebels to his Catholic Majesty, those whom he had deprived of their national rights, and who were guilty of no other offence than that of having heaped largesses on their invaders, to be employed for their own destruction.

“I said, that they must know as well as myself, it was to promote the service of your sacred Majesty that we have established colonies in this country; and they also knew, that all the natives of it had acknowledged themselves your Majesty’s vassals, and as such had for some time persevered in receiving good offices from us, and we the same from them; and that without any cause, the people of Culua, including those in the great city of Temixtitan, and all the other provinces subject to them, had not only rebelled against your Majesty, but even murdered several persons who were our kindred and friends, and had driven us entirely out of their land; and that they must likewise recollect what dangers and toils we had encountered, and at the same time be sensible of how great service it would be to God and your Catholic Majesty to endeavour to recover what had been lost, having on our part the justest cause and the best reasons for so doing, as we should both contend for the increase of our faith against a barbarous nation, and promote the service of your Majesty. Induced also by a regard to our own safety, and having the coöperation of many of the friendly natives, there were powerful causes to animate our hearts, and I therefore begged them to engage cheerfully in the enterprise, and take fresh courage.” — pp. 201, 202.

The Spanish forces and munitions were somewhat augmented before they reached Mexico, so that on the 28th of April, 1521, they consisted of eighty-six horse, one hundred and eighteen archers and musketeers, seven hundred foot, armed with swords and bucklers, together with three heavy iron cannon, and fifteen small copper field-pieces. With these resources the investment of the city was made. For the attack, thirteen brigantines also had been built, and with them a great victory over the Indian canoes was achieved. We shall not attempt to give a detailed account of the several encounters between the Spaniards and their allies, amounting to forty thousand men on the one side, and

the innumerable host of natives on the other, whom Cortés, "considering that they were rebels, and had discovered so strong a determination to defend themselves or perish," had no difficulty in satisfying his conscience that it was his duty to exterminate. One extract will show the commencement of the work of destruction.

"That they might become more sensible of their situation, I this day," says Cortés, "set fire to those noble edifices in the great square, where on the former occasion, when they expelled us from the city, the Spanish troops and myself were quartered. These buildings were so extensive that a prince with more than six hundred persons in his family and domestic retinue would have found ample space for their accommodation. There were others adjacent to these, which, although somewhat smaller, were more gay and elegant, and served Muteczuma for aviaries, in which he had every variety of birds known in that country. Although it grieved me much, yet as it grieved the enemy more, I determined to burn these palaces; whereupon they manifested great sorrow, as well as their allies from the cities on the lake, because none of them had supposed we should be able to penetrate so far into the city. This struck them with terrible dismay." — p. 280.

The fighting was desperate, and the siege was continued for seventy-five days, during which the Spaniards met with several losses, and Cortés himself was often exposed to imminent hazard. On one occasion, about forty Spaniards, and more than one thousand of their Indian allies, were slain; but this was the last opportunity that the Mexicans had of rejoicing for a victory. This check induced the Spanish chief to adopt a plan, which brought about the utter destruction of the city. As he gained possession of the several streets, he resolved to destroy all the houses on both sides, so as to leave only open ground behind him, and to convert the canals and other openings from the lakes into firm land. The Mexicans resisted all overtures of peace, desiring death in preference. Cortés, on his side, was very anxious for an arrangement, that the inhabitants might not throw their treasure into the waters. His measures were at last successful, and the siege was concluded, and with it the Mexican empire.

Our limits forbid any further extracts, while, with De Solis, we are disposed, for the honor of the Conqueror, to arrest our narrative at the fall of Mexico, and not to recount those

occurrences, in relation to the treatment of the high-minded but unfortunate Guautimucin, and of many of the caciques, which tend to tarnish the glory of the great Cortés. Nor on the theme of the Conquest need we further dilate. The American reader will, ere long, have an opportunity of perusing, from the pen of one of our accomplished countrymen, whose account of the reign of the Spanish sovereigns immediately preceding that of Charles the Fifth has already enrolled him among the classic historians of the language, the fullest details of this remarkable event. To Mr. Prescott, it is understood, that all documents, as well in the mother country as in America, that tend to illustrate his subject, have been laid open, and his narrative can hardly fail to render uninteresting any discussions founded solely on sources of information generally accessible, unless, like the letters of Cortés, they emanated from those directly engaged in the mighty enterprise.

The Despatches continue the history of Mexico to the 15th of October, 1524 ; and the fourth is dated from Temixtitan (Mexico), after Cortés had received his appointment of Governor and Captain-general of New Spain. It points out the manner in which he disposed of Tapia, whom he induced voluntarily to retire, notwithstanding the royal commission which he had received, and of Garay, who had again landed in the country with a considerable force, but with whom Cortés effected his purpose by means of a proposed matrimonial alliance. It includes accounts of the exploration of the mining districts, of the rebuilding of the capital on a magnificent scale, for which the labor of the Indians was put in requisition, and of the course which was pursued in order to bring the whole country into subjection to the crown of Spain. Cortés also refers to the suppression of the rebellion at Panuco, and to the expedition to Honduras, on which occasion the unfortunate Guautimucin was hanged, to the attempts made for the discovery of the supposed strait connecting the two oceans, and to his early explorations of the South Sea, or Pacific ocean. It likewise contains several suggestions for the internal administration of the provinces, and for a religious establishment.

As to the passage connecting the two oceans, which was so great an object of solicitude three hundred years ago, and which Cortés, in a letter written at Valladolid, in 1521, by

the Emperor Charles the Fifth, was particularly enjoined to search for, — it has been ascertained, that it can be found only by an artificial construction. But the importance of the communication is not the less on that account. The subject of the formation of a canal for this purpose attracted the notice of the Spanish government at an early period, and, thirty-five years ago, the matter was particularly examined by Humboldt, who indicated five places where it might be cut. It also formed one of the topics proposed for discussion at that Congress of the States of America, which was to have been held at Panamá, during the administration of President J. Q. Adams ; and it has more than once occupied the attention of our Federal legislature, as well as of the governments of our sister republics. It was the object of several proposed corporations or associations, during that period when the extension of the credit system in this country and in England held out inducements for enterprises far less promising. But there is now little hope, that it will soon be undertaken by the government of any country either in Europe or America ; and the report that appeared in the public journals a few weeks since, that a private commercial establishment in London, distinguished for its success and the character of its members, was about to accomplish this great work, is now contradicted. In this connexion, we cannot omit adverting to a most able paper on the subject, which has lately been published, in which the advantages to result from the work to Europe and America are set forth, and the feasibility of the several proposed routes is discussed. We refer to a letter from the accomplished minister of the United States at Berlin, addressed to Mr. Markoe, Secretary of the National Institute, and which appeared in the “*Intelligencer*” of the 19th of August last. Mr. Wheaton, in the historical summary of the projects suggested from the time of the discovery of the Pacific ocean by Balboa, or rather from the first reports of the Spanish engineers to the court of Madrid, made as early as 1528, refers to the refutation of the opinion long prevalent, though it was questioned by Baron Humboldt, that the Pacific ocean, at the isthmus of Panamá, was considerably higher than the Atlantic. The most accurate surveys, made by Mr. Lloyd, an English engineer, by order of Bolivar, in 1828 – 9, prove the error of the old idea, which is, however,



correct as to the elevation of the Red Sea above the Mediterranean, the case on which the supposition as to the Pacific and Atlantic was undoubtedly based.

We shall not dilate on the history of the Conqueror of Mexico, subsequent to the date of the last Despatch, further than to give a few of its principal incidents. Having been superseded as Governor, he went, in 1527, to Spain, where he was received with honor by the Emperor, and, by his marriage with the niece of the Duke of Bexar, became connected with several powerful families. He was created a Marquis, and Captain-general of New Spain and the provinces and coasts of the South seas, — with the power of conquering and establishing colonies, retaining the twentieth part of all his conquests for himself and his heirs. The government of New Spain, however, the object of his ardent desire, was refused to him. This, one of his contemporaries says, was owing not so much to considerations of state policy as to an affair of female pique, — another proof how frequently the most important events are influenced by trivial incidents. On occasion of his marriage, Cortés presented to the Empress, who was Regent of the kingdom, as well as to his wife, magnificent jewels ; but those of the Marchioness far surpassed those given to the Empress, an indignity which the latter never forgave. He returned to New Spain, but resided principally on his estate, directing, however, several expeditions to the South seas, in one of which he embarked in person, in 1536, and discovered California. Unable to obtain his proper position in the country which he had conquered, he went again to Castile, and even followed Charles the Fifth to Algiers, though without having any command in the expedition. He died at the age of sixty-two, when preparing to go back to America, leaving, though his political aspirations had been disappointed, large fortunes to all his children.

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